

of wings and misses the body. . . . The flight of a moth is straight and offers little difficulty, accordingly a moth can scarcely show itself by daylight without being pursued.'

Summing up his interesting and instructive 'Field Observation on the Enemies of Butterflies in Ceylon' (*Proc. Z. S.*, September 1913) Mr. J. C. Fryer after quoting a number of observations from his diary concludes that

(i) Butterflies do not form any large percentage of the food of the more common birds in Ceylon.

(ii) With the exception of the Swallow-Shrike (*Artamus fuscus*) birds are by no means clever in capturing butterflies.

(iii) The Swallow-Shrike is the only bird which actually lives on butterflies, and it almost always chooses butterflies of the so-called nauseous genera *Danais* and *Euplœa*; it seems however, that this preference is due to the difficulty of catching faster-flying species, and not to the superior flavour of *Danais* or *Euplœa*.

(iv) The various species of Bee-eaters, when attacking butterflies, usually choose members of the *Papilionidæ* and *Pieridæ*. [Eds.]

No. XXI.—HOUSE GECKO (*HEMIDACTYLUS SP.*) SHOWS A SWEET TOOTH

Some time ago I noticed a peppermint sweet lying on the side-board which had been partially eaten or rather sucked away in parts and, as I was anxious to find out who was responsible for this improper behaviour, I left it there, and kept a watch for the culprit. To my surprise after a little waiting, I noticed a flat form moving towards the sweet. I have got it! It was no other than the ordinary house lizard. After he had been there some time, I examined the sweet, and found that he had licked hollows into the margin of the sweet.

A few days later I noticed something that looked like a tail hanging out of the sugar basin. Again my curiosity got the better of me and I endeavoured to catch this little robber in the pot: I did. It turned out to be the gecko again, in all probability the same one. I caught and examined him and found that his mouth was full of sugar and that there was also a quantity adhering to his chops which were wet with saliva. I have heard people say that they have known these lizards to eat sugar but I never had the opportunity till now of observing it for myself.

It would be interesting to know where a lizard would get his sweets under ordinary circumstances and whether they are addicted to sweets or is this an acquired character of the house lizard only?

BOMBAY,

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No. XXII.—COMMENTS ON FR. LEIGH'S NOTES ON SNAKES

Reading Fr. Leigh's notes on snakes in the *Journal* (vol. xxxi, p. 227), I would like to make the following remarks with regard to the Russell's Viper squirting its poison. As the poison is harmless unless it gets into the blood, either through a bite or a wound, there would be no object for the snake to acquire the habit of squirting its poison. The snake in question was seized at the time. The undermentioned reasons might therefore enable us to explain the apparent squirting of the poison:—

The snake being seized behind the head, its first inclination is to open its mouth and also to inflate itself (being vexed). The grip of the person holding the snake may in this case have been high up pressing on the poison gland which would naturally cause the venom to flow to the tip of the fang, (this does occur when the snake is caught) and the exhalation of air (which is considerable in this viper) would naturally blow the poison off the tip of the fang. This has actually taken place with a specimen kept by me in St. Xavier's College, Bombay. I can hardly imagine that under natural circumstances the snake could or would squirt its poison in the manner described by Fr. Leigh. This has never come under my experience.

With regard to Fr. Leigh's attempt to drown a krait, it might be interesting to quote the following incident which took place in the same College. A